

Interview Logan Werth

Interview by Richard Killblane

Date of Interview: 12 June 2003

Location: Ft Eustis, VA

Killblane: Would you give me your name and when you were in Vietnam and who with?

Werth: My name's Logan P. Werth, and I was in Vietnam the end of August of '70 till the end of August of '71. I was on the Eve of Destruction two weeks after I got there, and I was on it for approximately two months as a driver, then I went on to the Uncle Meat as a gunner, then back to the twin .50s on the Uncle Meat. The Eve of Destruction and the Uncle Meat ran a lot together. When I was on it, the two crews were pretty tight. If we wanted to go somewhere we'd pick the Eve to go with us or the Eve would pick the Uncle Meat to go on the convoy that day and we stayed together at night. We just became a nice, tight eight guys-group.

Killblane: How did you get picked to be a driver for the Eve?

Werth: I asked to be a driver. I was there for about two weeks and I'd seen the gun truck and I said, "Boy, there's a lot of bolts on that truck and that's where I want to be, I don't want to run out." So, I asked the NCOIC [Non-commissioned Officer in charge] at that time, Cross was his last name, and I asked him if I could get on it, and he told me a couple of days later that the driver wanted to get off because he was getting short, and that I could drive it. He also told me if I was in the back during an ambush or anything and I laid down he said, "I'll shoot you myself." That was like a code that went with being on a gun truck, any guy that got on that I know of they're always told if you duck down during an ambush I'll shoot you myself. So, if we were in an ambush or we were turning around going back into an ambush, which happened different times, there was no ducking down or anything like that. You had to stand up and just return fire. So, that was part of it.

Killblane: Tell me about some of the changes that were made on the Eve when you were there.

Werth: I believe in late '70, February or March, they took the two [M]-60s off the left hand side and they put a .50 over there. .50s were better. I didn't think they jammed up as much as a 60, and maybe it was easier to carry a lot of .50 [caliber] rounds than .50 and [M]-60 both. I think we carried about 18,000 rounds of ammunition of the .50 caliber, then we carried a [M]-

79 in the cab with a box of 79s, the flares, the beehive round and the grenade that had to spin so many times then it would hit and explode. We did have a couple of 60s in the back just tucked in there in case we needed them. We had a box of grenades in the back corner, and we always took the white phosphorous and the concussion grenade out of there because we thought that if we got hit we didn't want either one of them to go off, the concussion or the white phosphorus. I don't know if it made any sense, I mean a whole box of grenades anyway, but a little paranoia went with being burned or just the concussion one, we usually took them out of there.

Killblane: Where did you put the box of ammo for the M-79?

Werth: That was in the cab.

Killblane: You pulled the passenger seat out, tell me about that.

Werth: The passenger seat was out and there was a box there and it was full of different 79 rounds. I believe the 79 was just where ever it was comfortable for the driver. I don't think there was no special spot. And, we carried oh, maybe six extra barrels. I'm not exact on that, but we did carry extra barrels in case they burned up. I did have one burn up on me one time and the projectile just got bigger and bigger as it went across the river. They get so hot that you can't grab them with your hands. We borrowed some gloves from the Air Force and they actually helped, it was still hot but you could get it out and then throw it on the floor.

Killblane: What about headspace and timing, when you're rolling down the road, did you have to adjust that often?

Werth: No. You usually set it in the morning. They had a timing gauge, you racked it back, you put it in there, then you touched the butterfly and it wouldn't click, then you pull it back and put the thinner one in there which it would say "go" on it. First it would say "no go" and then it would say "go." We let it go forward and when it said "go" and it clicked and then it would supposedly be timed. Most of the time you could twist them all the way in to where they would click then you could just back them off two clicks, three clicks, right in there, then you were pretty good to go. They did have some like a white oil, the military had to use, but it seems like they shot slower, so we used regular motor oil and we kept motor oil in canteens in there, and we poured them in there then the guns would really shoot a lot better.

Killblane: Tell me about the canvas you had over there.

Werth: There was a canvas that went above the tool box here, it just folded up and it was real heavy so it just laid on there. There wasn't a lot of times, but when it was raining really hard we would take the guns and point them up and then throw the top over the top of the barrels, it make like a tent on the back of the truck. We had stretchers on the back that we would open up and we'd go from one side of the gun truck to the other, sleep on them or on the floor, and it was hot underneath anywhere.

Killblane: When did you sleep on the truck?

Werth: When we weren't in our company area, or we were just so tired that we'd just sleep on it.

Killblane: That's when you got to the end, your turn around destination?

Werth: Where we were going, we didn't have no place there dug in underground or anything, nowhere to sleep. So we could sleep underneath it where it was cooler. We could sleep on the stretchers, and we also slept on the canvas top, too.

Killblane: Tell me the role of the gun truck, the Eve of Destruction. Where was its place in the convoy?

Werth: One of the roles of the gun trucks were to provide security for the convoys and there would be a jeep or a gun truck at the beginning, so many back would be a gun truck, so many back a gun truck, and then at the rear there would be a gun truck, so there was always control of the whole convoy, within a convoy. Then, also, there was a radio [to call] back to where you had left and where you were going, so they knew where the convoy was at all the time during the trip.

Killblane: How many ambushes were you in?

Werth: Probably four of them.

Killblane: Could you describe what it was like to be on a gun truck in an ambush, and what your job was, what you did?

Werth: My first ambush [20 March 1971], we were going to Vandergrift, we were kind of up by Khe Sanh, and they called us to go into town that night. Actually before we went into town we dug a hole and put some potatoes in there and then we put some wood on top and built a frame and (?), then we went down to the river, he [Richard Frazier] was a sergeant and he said, "We'll go fishing." Threw a grenade in, fish came up, I swam on down to bring them up. We got back and they said, "You're going into town."

So, we went into town, actually we ate there, on the way back the MPs stopped us and said, "There's friendlies in the area, don't fire back." As we were getting close to our camp we heard on the radio, Satan's Little Angel had been hit. We went through the ambush and they hit in the rear, so the King Kong and the Uncle Meat turned around and went back into the ambush and there was just tracers going everywhere. I believe the King Kong was hit. Our job was to just spray the area, and we were spraying off to the left actually. I put a little oil on my guns in action my gun caught on fire. It finally did go out. The gunner on this side would be the right side. There was a little hill there. The captain [1LT Ralph Fuller] was trapped in there. After we shot for, I don't know, half an hour, 45 minutes, we got him. There was another guy, too, I don't remember. There was another guy, this was his first convoy, and it was my first ambush. Mistakes are made in war, I came that close to killing that guy in that truck just out of confusion. I didn't shoot him. I'll never forget it how close I came to killing him. I don't even know who he was.

While the ambush was going on, Vandergrift wasn't very far away, and they were shooting cannon flares up into the air with big parachutes to light up the area, so they were coming down and coming down, and finally it stopped. When we were pulling out of the ambush, we were pulling out real slow. The MPs originally told us the Infantry was out there, the friendlies. The friendlies were on the right hand side of the truck and they were behind that little hill. I don't know how many there was, but one of them took a little pin flare, you hold it in your hand and release it and it shoots up in the air. When we were pulling away he let that pin flare go, I guess it was to say we're here, they're lucky there was a hill there because that guy with a single 50 right here, they wouldn't have had a chance.

Killblane: Which gun truck was that?

Werth: That was the Uncle Meat.

Killblane: You said that was a night ambush?

Werth: That was a night ambush.

Killblane: How come you were out on the road at night?

Werth: We ran night and day.

Killblane: Oh, this is between Qui Nhon and port?

Werth: This is between Vandergrift and whichever was the first place on back. I don't think it was [Dong Ha], it was just a little place back. See, we mostly ran Vandergrift to Khe Sanh back and forth, day and night, day and night, day and night. I remember being in Khe Sanh and the Viet Cong were shooting mortars over into the ammo dump and we were so tired we just said I hope one don't land short, and went to sleep in the back of the truck. That's how tired you got.

Killblane: Tell me about the other ambushes.

Werth: Another time the King Kong was in an ambush and actually we came back through our company area going to it, and there were mortars landing on both sides of the road because they were hitting the guys in the camp, too. We got up to that ambush and there was some guy in the mountain that had shot at the King Kong, and there was a tank there and he pulled around, shot a few times. There really wasn't a lot to that.

The next morning after the first ambush, we went back because Satan's Little Angel was blown up, and [Richard] Frazier was killed, the guy that I went fishing with that day. We went back out there, the dog teams were there and they would bring, I believe, five bodies out. I believe they had uniforms and even had some new guns with grease on them and they kind of lined them all up and then they checked through them to see what they were carrying any papers or whatever, and I believe they just bulldozed them under, just bulldozed them.

Another time we were going to, it was up by Laos, actually by Khe Sanh at a fire base, and we went in there and it was all dirt and dusty. The next morning, I said, "We want to be the first truck out of here, we don't want to eat the dust all day." I had a pecan roll and I was holding it up like that to that guy behind me, I said, "I've got a pecan roll in a can and it's still good." I looked back and I just seen the minesweepers that were coming back from sweeping roads, and I had just seen that guy go like that. The front tire missed it but the back first outside dual hit it. It was a concussion mine, so it blew us up in the air and knocked everybody down, the captain that was just riding with us for the day. He broke a couple of ribs. It blew both our tires off, it blew our fuel tank open, and it probably blew a hole in the ground yeah deep. There's pictures of that.

Killblane: Which gun truck?

Werth: Uncle Meat. So they were going to leave the Uncle Meat there and we said, “No, we’re not leaving it here.” So, we chained the axel up to the train on the one side, took all the ammunition off - 400 rounds, and had another truck tow us down the mountain back to Vandergrift. A couple of weeks later we lifted the box off and they slid another truck underneath it and we were back on the road again. The driver [David Rose] has back problems still from that, and one of the gunners, you know, the concussion was so much that, can you imagine one of these trucks being picked up in the air? I mean, that’s how big the concussion was on that. After it went off, everybody’s knocked down to the ground and I’m looking at my buddy, Danny Jones, and I’m looking, I know I’ve got a hole somewhere. I looked at him and his eyes were about this big, oh, man. So, I got up and it knocked all the ammo on the boxes that were hanging from the .50s, there was smoke everywhere, so I was reloading. Danny says, “Don’t shoot, don’t shoot, it was a mine,” because we didn’t know what happened. That was an experience, running over the mine.

Went to another ambush where they had got ambushed and one of the gun trucks had run out ammo, we went back into it, shot it up for a little while, not a whole bunch, maybe, I don’t know, 6-7,000 rounds, out of the .50s. That’s where I burned up the barrel. There was a guy laying in the road that was shot, I think his heel was gone, he was shot in the back, too. I shot and Danny Jones got off and he and another guy took him to a chopper and they helped evac him out. There might have been just little ones after that we went to.

Killblane: What was it like being on a gun truck, how does it feel?

Werth: Well, there was air, he was driving down the road and you had a breeze blowing on you, that was a good thing. A lot of times when we’d get somewhere they’d send us out to, not a lot of times, but sometimes they’d send us out on perimeter so Charlie couldn’t get in. Then we had gun truck, tank, gun truck, tank, and the password was “table” and “boss.” If a guy come up and he said “table” and I said “boss” then he could come to me. You couldn’t see that far in front of your face. The tank, the batteries went bad or something. He come walking over there and said the wrong, he said “table” and I said “boss”, and it was all wrong anyway, so he told us what the problem was. We weren’t very far apart. Then, an hour or so later something blew part of the ammo dump up, probably a communist. They went by us, they were slick. If

they wanted you, they had you. Being on a gun truck was good for different reasons, if Charlie was in the weeds and he wanted you, just like the guys who did lose their lives they had you.

Killblane: How did you feel about being on a gun truck?

Werth: I thought it was safe. Some people say you're a sitting duck, but there were a lot of bullets and there were guns, I felt safer on a gun truck than I did in a regular cargo truck.

Killblane: On an ambush, does a gun truck have to go into the kill zone next to the disabled vehicles, or just to the edge of the kill zone?

Werth: No, right on in. Like the first ambush there was a little $\frac{3}{4}$ [-ton] that was shot up. The Satan's Little Angel, they come out with all flat tires. They were barely making it, and we had to drive right directly into the ambush. When you get into an ambush, the driver's job would be to back the truck up and bring the truck forward, back it up so you're always moving so Charlie couldn't come in on you with say a B40. He could probably do that fast enough, but a mortar or whatever that had to take time to go through the air, so the driver's always taking it forward, the driver's always bringing it backward, so you just weren't exactly a sitting duck.

Killblane: What's the role of the crew in the box? How many did you have in the box?

Werth: Three.

Killblane: What's their jobs in an ambush?

Werth: To lay down fire, and the NCOIC had the radio so he would be in contact with anybody that was calling about whatever they wanted to know, if there's somebody down or if another truck got blown up or what was going on. Just put all the .50 calibers, just spray just everywhere.

Killblane: What was the call sign on the Eve, do you remember?

Werth: I think we were "Funky Four." I think that's what it was, I didn't run the radio. I can't remember that, everything. I believe that's what it was.

Killblane: Is there anything else that you can think of that I may not have asked?

Werth: Not really.

Killblane: How did you feel the first time you saw the Eve after Vietnam?

Werth: I came here in '77, and I was glad to see that it had actually made it; because in '70, I was there when they were painting it up and getting it ready to go. The two guns in the front, they're made of AC spark plug. They have the round holes like that, in the back there's a round holed one and there's a slotted one. The round holed one the back is AC, the slotted one

is made in Plymouth, Michigan. That's just to let you know where they were made at. I don't know if anybody knew that. Plymouth, if you have a BB gun that's made in Plymouth, Michigan, you've got a BB gun that's worth some money.

Killblane: I thank you for the interview.

Werth: And thank you for doing all this for all the guys.